

THE
DANGER
OF

MASQUERADES and RAREE-SHOWS,
OR THE
Complaints of the Stage,
AGAINST

Masquerades, Opera's, Assemblies,
Balls, Puppet-shows, Bear-gardens, Cock-
fights, Wrestling, Posture-masters, Cud-
gel-playing, Foot-ball, Rope-dancing,
Merry-makings, and several other irra-
tional Entertainments, as being the Ground
and Occasion of the late Decay of Wit
in the Island of *Great-Britain*.

By C. R. of C. C. C. Oxford.

Inscribed to Mrs. OLDFIELD.

L O N D O N,
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AGAINST

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fight, Whist, and other pastimes, and

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contrary to the laws of the

Kingdom, and to the

peace and good order of the

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By C. C. C. C. Oxford.

Inscribed to Mrs. Oldfield.

LONDON

Printed for W. B. ... in the year
1718.

(Printed by ...)

T O

Mrs. OLDFIELD.

MADAM,

TIS not only the Apprehension of the *Vulgar*, (who are every Day remarkable for their Stupid Conjectures) but also *Persons* of no small Penetration have been alarm'd at the great Number of *Raree-Shows*, which of late have pass'd under our Windows. And some who had a high Idea of the *King of Sicily's* Politicks, cou'd not be perswaded but that the *Puppets* might start up into *Armies*, while the Master of the *Engine* was a *General* in disguise ready to head the *Inchanted Enemy*. But *Heaven* which has always protected this *Nation* both

B against

DEDICATION.

against publick and private Assaults, inspired some of our Zealous *Magistrates*, happily to surprise these invisible Camps before they cou'd bring about their suspected Designs. I own, I am not quite so extravagant in my Speculations; yet I cannot but think the sudden Appearance of these *Savoyards*; did prognosticate some dangerous *Revolution*; not of the *Government*, (which *Puppets* cannot expect to Subvert, when whole Armies of more than Men, have been so often repuls'd) but of some other Branch of our Happiness. And according to my Divination, they seem to have been a *Providential* Warning of that overgrown *Raree-Show*: The *Masquerade*, which was lately exhibited to the great Detriement of Wit, and Ingenuity. However, I will stand Corrected in my Opinion, by those
who

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who can give a better Account of the
Surprise the *Town* has been in upon
that Occasion. Now, *Madam*, the
Stage (where you have long Reign'd
Absolute) being the chief *Staple* of
Wit, I make bold to remind you of
the Danger your *Charge* is in, unless
the *Publick* be well Guarded against
the Attack: The *Mob* will always be
Incorrigible upon this Head, but
such as are capable to distinguish be-
tween *Mrs. Oldfield* npon the *Stage*,
and the *Muffl'd Crew* in the *Hay-market*,
will never forgive themselves that
Piece of Prodigality, in paying three
Guineas and a Half to see Nature in
a *Masque*, instead of a Crown to see
her in her own *Shape*. They only
give a *Dark Lesson* which none under-
stand but such as are Accustom'd to
discourse by Signs; whereas you give
a fine turn to good Sense and Breed-
ing,

DEDICATION.

ing, by a quick and prevailing Method. You entertain our *Reason*, they amuse the *Sense* with a Suspension of *Reason*. You enter into the *Passions*, and *Follies* of Mankind, and discover the *Fort*, and the *Foible* of all Stations. They Administer Matter for your *Ridicule*, or *Compassion*. You in fine live a Rational Life, they an Animal Life. And that the *Stage* may always Flourish, (as it never can fail, while it is under the Influence of so powerful a *Protectrix*) is the constant wish of one, who is no farther a Friend to *Masquerades* than by being unwilling to discover how much he is.

M A D A M,

Your great Admirer

and most humble

Servant. C. R.

THE
PREFACE.

AS I return'd the other Day from visiting a Friend in the City, two Things very much surpriz'd me. One was the Idle Posture of the Goldsmiths in Lombard-street, the other was the Melancholy Aspect of the Booksellers in St. Paul's-Church-yard. The first was owing to the Scarcity of Silver, the latter to a Decay of Wit. And as a Distemper naturally calls out for a Cure, so within my self I assum'd the Quality of a Physician. I overlook'd the first Misfortune as too big for my Care, and besides being a Politick Evil, it seem'd to require a National Consultation to draw Men out of the Surprise. The other appear'd to be any Mans Business, wherefore using the common Freedom of other Sons of Adam, I was resolv'd to probe the bottom of the Wound, and make an Essay towards restoring those Smuglers of Learning the Booksellers, to a Pristine Serenity of Countenance.

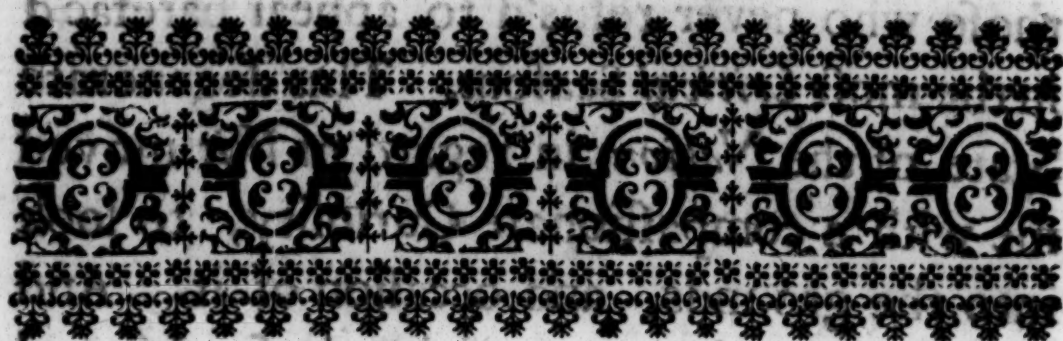
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The P R E F A C E.

That a bright Nation shou'd become Dull, and Insipid, is somewhat suitable to other Steps of Divine Providence, which is remarkable for Variety in that Kind. And if all Sublunary things are subject to change, why may we not expect to see an Ebbing, and Flowing of Wit? Nature puts a stop to the Growth of all other Productions, and feeds them only that they may Subsist, not that they may increase to a Gigantick Size. The keenest Appetite may be Cloy'd. And every Nation has a non plus ultra in the way of Trade. And why may not there be a glut as well of Wit, as of Merchandize, or Victuals? A few Years ago, Dunkirk was a rich, and flourishing Town; now 'tis a Nest of Beggars. And why? Their Stock is Spent, and they have no Import. In a Word, if the brightest Beauties are obliged to submit to an Alteration, and the Sun it self sometimes suffers a Total Ecclipse, the British Nation must not pretend to be exempt from the common Fate.

THE

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THE
DANGER
 OF
 MASQUERADES and RAREE-SHOWS,
 OR THE
 Complaints of the STAGE, &c.

I Have for a considerable time
 been a private *Observer* of what
 I now presume to make pub-
 lick: And it was a very irk-
 some Meditation in my retir'd
 Moments, to reflect that *Show* Shou'd be pre-
 fer'd to *intrinsick* Merit; the *Fidler*, to the
Phi-

Philosopher, and a *Knave* under a *Masque* to those who never refus'd to appear barefac'd in the most *Critical* Seasons. This degenerate State of the *Nation* in regard of *Wit* moved me with a compassionate Curiosity, to look into the grounds, and occasion of it. And upon a general Survey of the abuse, I found it proceeded from attributing too much to the *Senses*, and too little to the *Judgment*. Men of *Wit*, who Studied to refine the Soul were discountenanc'd, and only those caress'd who cou'd give the Senses an Animal Amusement. Now as no Distemper comes to a head on a suddain, so this grand Enemy to *Liberal Sciences* call'd a *Masquerade* was usher'd into the Nation by little irrational Entertainments, wick all look'd the same way, and took their rise from the Populace, Stupidity, and want of Reflexion. For as *Nits* by assembling together in corners do grow into Lice, so *Puppet-Shows*, *Raree-Shows*, *Balls*, *Assemblies*, and *Opera's* by a quick growth became a *Masquerade*. But that the Cure of this dangerous Distemper may be render'd Compleat, I will look into the Origin of this woeful Revolt from *Wit*, to *Stupidity*.

Lesser

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Leffer Failings in point of *Wit* have been a long time bore with, as chiefly reigning among *Persons* of no Consequence. --- And tho' now and then a *Man of Distinction*, was seen at the *Bear-garden*, or showing his Parts in *Lincolns-Inn-fields*, 'tis only of late that a *General Defection* has been observ'd, and that the *Wit* of the *Stage* has been obliged to give way to the *dumb Pageantry* of a *Masquerade*. When first I heard a description of one of those *noble Exhibitions*, it seem'd to me that either the *Nation* had committed some notorious Villany, or that they were prepar'd to do it, because they durst not show their Face. And indeed, they have committed the greatest of *Villanies*; *Wit* is assassinated, and in a *Masque* too, that the *Murtherer* may better escape the hand of justice.

But to enter upon the Cause. This *Rare-Show* where *H—r* turns the Key to set the *Puppets* a dancing has no other claim to *Ingenuity* than what is derived from a *Learned Taylor*, or a *Nimble Butler*; All the intrinsic worth consists in the Beauties of the Back and Belly. Oh! what a glorious Entertainment will be for *Posterity* half a *Century* hence, to

call over the famous Atchievements of their *Ancestors*, who in such a *Kings* Reign, in such a year of our *Lord*, and on such a day of the *Month*, were so Ingenious as to put a *Taylor* in mind of shaping a Piece of Velvet into a *Spanish Doublet* to the great Admiration of all Spectators ? And what a remarkable *Epocha* of domestick Occurrences will it be to date them from the time that noble Trophy was hung up in the Wardrobe, with the Learned Observation of. *This was my Grandfires Dress at such a Masquerade ?*

Wit has been visibly upon the Decay ever since the Nation seem'd inclin'd to prefer *Haymarket* to *Drury-lane* : And the Pleasures of Sense, to the Beauties of the Mind. *Musick* at the most is but *Noise* under different *Modifications*, and Effects the *Ear*, as Colours affect the *Eye* : But neither reach the Soul. Both *Seeing*, and *Hearing* are irrational, and Animal Entertainments. Some make it a great Question whether a *Poet* ought to be esteem'd a *Wit* ; because the Singularity of the Performance which shou'd purchase him that Name is all *Musical*. The best *Poems* are only common Sense, with the advantage of

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of *Jingle* and *Rhime* ; which diverts the Ear but improves not the Understanding. Those celebrated Verses of Mr. *Dryden* upon the Duke of *Buckingham*.

*Who in the Space of one Revolving Moon,
was Fidler, Statesman, Chymist, and Buffoon.*

Only amount to this piece of poor, vulgar, common Sense, *vid.* His Grace the Duke of *Buckingham* was seldom of the same mind a Month together. So that the Perfection of Poetry is to put a good Tune to prose, and the *Poet* and the *Fidler* are almost equal in their claim as to *Wit*. Rubbing a few *Horse-hairs* upon *Cat-gutts*, or rising higher, or lower with a Mans Voice are but poor *Topicks*, to render a Nation famous. Ay, but Musick is Divine, and full of Charms. I allow some People's Fingers are more manageable than others. And one has a more open Throat, a clearer Pipe, Teeth better adapted to articulate sound than another ; but at the same time, this is all a Mechanical Advantage, still there is no Inconsistence between a *Fool*, and a *Musician*.

Assemblies are no less of ill Consequence than *Masquerades*. *Avarice*, and *Lust*, are
the

the two Capital Inducements to meet upon such Occasions. But neither of them require much Wit. There may be *Craft* indeed, in shaking the Elbow, and dealing out the *Cards*, as also something of Management in carrying on an *Amorous Intrigue*; but a *Blockhead* is as capable to nick the Main, as a Man of Sense; and there is no occasion to be a *Philosopher* for a Man to cuckold his Neighbour. A good Assurance, and a Purse of Gold will do the *Feat*.

Balls are still a greater Prejudice to *Wit*. They pluck it up by the very Roots, by destroying *Thought*, and *Reflection*, and exposing *Mortals* to a continual Dissipation of Mind. 'Tis indeed an *Ingenious Enquiry*; to find out who and who were Partners at a *Country Dance*. And turning sometimes to the Right, and sometimes to the Left, may be of great Importance to human Kind. And 'tis about as much a Subject of Triumph to cut a *Capre* three quarters of a yard high, as to step upon one of the Benches in the *Mall*; and so leap down again. I know no Substantial Difference there is between shuffling a Mans Feet upon the Ground, and playing with

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with his Cravat. Is not Mr. *Clinch* preferable to *Nicholini* in variety of Noise-Wit? It wou'd be too low and trivial an Observation, to insist much upon the *Antipathy* there is between *Wit*, and those vulgar Pastimes, *Rope-dancing*, *Foot-ball*, *Wrestling*, *Puppet-shows*, &c. Yet it will not be amiss to mention them upon that Account. For tho' broken Shins, broken Heads, Contusions, Dislocations, unmannerly Grinning, Hoarsness, and offensive Vociferations, are only the immediate Effect of those Pastimes, yet they discover the Want, and very much incline Mankind to a Decay of Wit.

But that I may yet make a farther Discovery of the Nature of this Distemper, I will reduce the occasions of the decay of *Wit*, to these three Heads. Some may be esteem'd *Natural*; others *Moral*; others *Politick*. Some are not witty, because 'tis not in their Power, others are too good *Christians* to be witty; a *Third* sort are deterr'd from it by a Principle of *Self-Preservation*. 'Tis a Controverted Point, whether there be any difference in the natural Perfections of the Soul. This is a Piece of Curiosity I am not willing to

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to dwell upon; tho' indeed it appears to me, as if the only Difference were in the *Organization* of the Body. A *Wit* becomes a *Madman* by having something displac'd in his Head; and a *Natural Fool* would have been a *wise Man*, if some Accident had not disturb'd the Formation of the *Fœtus*. A *Fool* is crippl'd in his Brain, as one that has a short Leg is crippl'd in that Member. Yet we cannot say there is any Defect in the *Soul*, in either Case. But to wave this Point, among the *Natural Impediments* of Wit, the *Climate* may be consider'd in the first Place. The *Sun* certainly has a strong Influence upon the lower World; it affects not only the *Earth*, and the *Air*, but also *Human Bodies*; and by Concomitancy gives some kind of turn to the Passions of the Soul. In the *Indies*, it produces *Silver*, *Gold*, and *Diamonds*. In the Southern Parts of *Europe*, *Wine*, *Marble*, *Oranges*, *Olives*, &c. Towards the North it is prolific in *Rocks*, *Heath*, *Crabbs*, *Gooseberries*, *Hops*, *Beer*, *Potatoes*. And why this Difference in the Fruits of the Earth? But because the Rays of the *Sun* are more Feeble, the nearer she approacheth to the Northern Pole:

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Pole: So that many of her Productions in such *Latitudes* may be look'd upon as the *Abortives of Natures*. *Human Bodies* in like manner lie under the same Influence: It is attributed to the stronger, or weaker Vibrations of the Sun, that some of the Inhabitants of the *Earth* are *black*, others *tawny*, others *white*. By the same Method, Man's Size is alter'd, as well as his Colour. The *Southern Women* cease to bear Children soon after *Twenty*; the stubborn *Northern Lass*, holds out till near *Fifty*. All which proceeds very much from the Difference of *Climates*. Yes, both *Sickness* and *Health*, depend in many *Respects* upon the Power of the Sun. A dull, hazy Day, disturbs the Temperament of the *Body*, and setts the *Humours* afloat, whereas a bright Season draws them out and dissolves 'em in the Air, by way of *Perspiration*. *Mediterranean Countries* are not so subject to dull Influences as *Islands*. There the *Air* is thin, and refin'd, here thick, and moist. This occasioneth a difference in the *Passions*, and penetration of the *Inhabitants*. Under this Head we may consider *Diet* was very much conducing to render

render Persons dull, or sprightly. Beef, Mutton, Pudding, and generally all Butchers Meat, (unless the animal Parts be very much sublimated by a skillful Hand) are a great Enemy to Wit; But *Chicks, Quails, Teals, Beccaficas, &c.* are the proper Food for Ingenuity. What made D---y, T---e, and several others such stupid Writers, but frequenting Chop-houses? whereas, half a Guinea now, and then, laid out at *Bramns, or Pontacks*, wou'd have turn'd to Advantage, by the effect it wou'd have had upon their *Intellectuals*. Living too long in a small *Edifice* call'd a Box, confines the Ideas; a Coal fire spoils the Furniture of the Mind. To drink Beer instead of Wine, lowers *Wit* so much *per Cent*; and in a few Years it will change a Person of the most refin'd *Genius* into a mere *Rapsodist*.

Another Occasion of the *Decay* of Wit is, the great Mistake some *Pretenders* that Way lye under, as to the Call of Nature. No Man is bless'd with an universal *Genius*. How many excellent *Plow-men* are daily spoil'd by putting on a *Parsons Gown*. And how many *Factionous Statesmen* injure the Publick

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lick by mistaking the *Court* for a *Coffee-House*. What an awkward Sight is it to see a *Dancing-Master* lead up an *Army*, or the *Captain* of a *Man of War* riding a *Race* at *New-market*. The want of attending to this *Call of Nature*, fills the *World* with *Nonsense*, *Mismanagement*, and *Improprieties* in every *Station of Life*.

Again ; The *Nation* at present seems as much mistaken in the *Idea* of *Wit*, as they are in their *Call* to that *Employment*. Some take a *Wit* and a *wise Man* to be the same Thing. Indeed in *Old Times*, every *Virtuous Man* was esteem'd a *Wit* ; because his *Sentiments* distinguish'd him from the *Common* of *Mankind*, and he made himself admir'd for a *laudable Singularity* in his *Conduct*. Others in the other extreme, take a *Wit* to be a *Man* of *barren Speculations*, who glories in neglecting what is of *real use* to *Mankind*. A third Sort wou'd be esteem'd *Wits* upon account of correcting *Solecisms*, and false *Punctuations*, and digging for *Etymologies*. And the *Generality* of *Men* are willing to confound *Memory*, with *Wit*, as if *Wit* consisted in carrying *Burdens*, and Loading the

Memory with Words. Nor is the Number of those less who regard Wit as an absolute Quality, which some may be Masters of in all its Latitude. But the Truth is, 'tis all respective, tied to *Places, Terms, Seasons, and different Employments*. He that is a Wit in one Respect, may expose himself in many others. One that is *Wise* in the Drawing Room, may be a *Fool* in the Dairy. A Country-Gentleman perhaps is as ignorant of the Difference between a *Maid of Honour*, and a *Lady of the Bed-Chamber*; as a *Courtier* is incapable to distinguish between a fat Sheep and lean one, and a notable Blunder either way, shews that every Man is a *Fool* in what he does not understand. I was once acquainted with a very Learned Foreign Divine, who notwithstanding was puzzled with the Query; whether Travellers went by Land or Sea, from *Callis* to *Dover*. The Scripture will make an excellent Divine, but it does not give a Map either of *France* or *England*.

In the next place, I am to consider the *Moral Impediments* of *Wit*. In a leud Age, a *Moral Wit* is very little relish'd. *Rochester*

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is almost every Bodies Book. *Cowley* is more admir'd than *Read*. What a World do we live in, that a Man must abjure *Christianity* to become *Witty*! Purge the *Book-sellers* Shops of *Satyr*, and *Smut*, and there is nothing to give a moral Man an Hours Diversion. A *Play* is what most Persons have recourse to for a little Relaxations; And what is it we laugh at upon that occasion? Either to see a Man stumble over a Block, or to hear that he is Cuckolded. That is; we never seem'd pleas'd, but either with *Impertinence*, or *Impiety*. A serious moral Scene, is every Bodies Aversion. As for what requires Study, it can have no Diversion in it, and less Ingenuity. What Wit is there in an *Act of Parliament*, *Bishop Hoadleys Controversies*, or Sir *Isaac Newtons Demonstrations*? They neither divert nor improve, unless a Man turns *Recluse*, and locks himself up four Days in a Week to understand their meaning. That *Engine* was certainly a *Master-piece* in its Kind, which mark'd out all the Moistions of the *Celestial Globe*, and Answer'd many intricate Questions belonging to *Astronomy*; but if he that is tied up to Minutes, must Study two

Hours before he can learn what a Clock it is, there may be Wit in the *Invention*, but the *Treasure* lies too deep to be worth while to dig for it. But to return from this Digression. Too much Religion, or a nicety in Morals, is certainly a very great Occasion of the Scarcity of Wit. It does not only hinder Men of *bright Parts* from making their *Ideas* publick, but 'tis also a Restraint upon them in Conversation. I have known several *Conscientious Wits* abstain from *Jests*, *Puns*, and *Repartees*, partly for fear of taking a vanity in the *Performance*, and partly for fear of being tempted to a farther Impiety of becoming *extravagantly witty*. Perhaps it will be alledg'd against me, that my Arguments are inconsistent. For if Morality be one of the Grounds of the decay of Wit, how comes it that a *Nation* so extremely wicked, is so extremely dull? To this it is easily reply'd; That as the Sun ripens Fruit, so it is often the occasion of its rotting and dropping from the Tree. And as a little Wine exhilarates the Soul and makes a Man *witty*; so a little Liberty in Morals, gives Nature an Opportunity to show her Vivacity: But when this

Liberty

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Liberty is wretchedly improved into *Profaneness*, it rises above a Jest, and does not divert the Ear, but makes it tingle. To laugh at a *Clergyman's* broad Hat is sometimes esteem'd a notable Piece of Wit, especially when 'tis roguisly perform'd. To misapply a Text of *Scripture* to a use somewhat profane, is a farther advance in the same School. But to banter, and play with the number *Three*; because of the Reference it bears to the *Mystery* of the *Trinity* will scarce pass for Wit, unless it be in a Nation abandon'd to *Impiety*. So this Age has it in Election to embrace either Part of the Alternative. Either to renounce their Claim to *Wit*, or accept of it upon the Terms of *Impiety*.

The false *Idea* of *Wit*, which now is in vogue, excludes those from having any pretence to it, whose Education otherwise wou'd back their Claim; I mean the *Clergy*. For 'tis to be observ'd, that *Learning* is not *Wit*, but often *Stupidity*. 'Tis not the *Movement-maker*, but the *Finisher* who challenges the Name of the celebrated *Watchmaker*. As *Wit* now goes, 'tis a rarity if not an impossibility for a *Clergyman* to be witty without breaking

breaking through his Character. Dr. S.—t and some others are an Instance of this Kind. Their Friends find it a Difficult task to make them Christians. In the first Place a *Clergyman* ought to be Serious, Wit is Light, and unsuitable to his Cloth. Wit is nourish'd by Wine, and Pleasant Conversation. The *Clergyman's* business is Sobriety, and Retirement. Wit lies in *Plays, Romances, Novells, Lampoons* and other Performances of that Nature, excepting Balls, Assemblies and Masquerades. But the *Clergyman's* Employment are the *Bible, Thirty nine Articles, Book of Homilies, Journal of the Convocation, Practice of Piety, whole Duty of Man &c.* And he ought to shine no where in the way of Wit, but at a Christning, Wedding, or some other *Parochial Occasion*, where a *Jejune* Story of *King Charles* the Second's Days will not fail of meeting with great Applause.

Formerly the *fair Sex* had very large Pretensions to Wit; but now alas! Modesty cuts them off: For I cannot think they will be disposed to purchase that Name at the expence of their Reputation. The Truth is, I am very unwilling to exclude them, from
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what wou'd be a considerable Addition to the rest of their shining *Qualities*; but the *Iniquity* of the Times will have it so. And I wish I cou'd say that of late they had not joyn'd in the common Cry against Wit, and enter'd into several dangerous Combinations opposite to that Claim. A *beautiful Face*, a *fine Shape*, a *gentle Mien*, a *sweet Accent*, a *graceful Carriage*, and other such like Ingredients of a compleat *Lady*, tho' they cannot be call'd Wit, yet by the *Courtesy* of all Men of *Wit*, and *Honour*, they entitle the *Proprietors* to the Name and Privileges of *Wit*; as being the Natural Consequences of *Wit*, and *Ingenuity*; but now all these noble *Symptoms* of *Femal Merit* are lost under *Farce*, and *Masquerade*, we can neither distinguish the Perfections, nor do Justice to the right Owner. The *Filt*, and the *Sincere Lover*, *Beauty* and *Abomination*, *Virtue* and the *Lady of Pleasure* are so blended together, that this *Nation* never before countenanc'd so publick an Injustice done to their *Fair Sex*. Yes, they are now fallen to such a State of *Degeneracy*, that they have put off the very outward *Body* of *Wit*, and taken up an *Apish Carriage* in
its

its stead. *Affected Accents, Impertinent Gaity, unmannerly Wispering, unseasonable Gigling, crumpling the Mouth, peeping through the Eye,* with a Thousand such like *Italian Grimaces,* have quite demolish'd the fine *English Lady.* And if there is any remains of *Wit,* yet among them it can only be call'd *Cunning,* in carrying on an *Intrigue,* which notwithstanding is every Day forfeited by a *Foolish Discovery.*

We are now coming to the *Politick Impediments* of Wit. In these Days few wise Men write Books; and Fools cannot Write. What a loss of time is it therefore, to read the Works of this Age? There are many *Politick Reasons* why a Man shou'd never put Pen to Paper in Quality of an *Author*; but none more prevalent than *Interest.* If any thing cou'd induce a Man to act against his *Interest* it wou'd be *Wit,* which often Sacrificeth Friends, Relations, and every thing that Dear, and Valuable. Some witty Fools there are who rather chuse to Starve than not exercise their *Faculty* contrary to their own *Interest,* but the Generality wou'd gain by their Wit. The Craft of *Booksellers* has occasion'd several of my Acquaintance to abstain

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stain from being witty, tho' otherwise they were well Qualified. Persons of *Substance*, and who are easy in their Fortunes are above the drudgery of Wit; and those who wou'd live by it, drudge without Profit. All this is owing to the *Booksellers* who Monopolize the *Merchandize*. There is more Skill required in making a Hand of Wit, than in being really witty. It is Observable among the *Jockeys* at *New-market*, that after the Speed of a *Horse* is blown, all the Advantage he has above a *Jade* depends upon the *Match-makers* Craft. But if the Speed of a Running Horse can be kept a Secret, the whole *Meeting* are easily bit. If a *Bookseller* lays hold of a *Wit*, he endeavours to perswade him he is not so; and by this Means the *Author* is his *Bubble* for several Years, till the *Smugler* grows rich, and the *Wit* writes himself into a Goal.

Frequenting *Coffee-Houses* is a great Obstacle to *Wit*. You may meet with an *Atheist* in one, a *Socinian* in another, a *Tory* in a Third; but a *Wit* in none of 'em. I cannot tell what *Coffee-Houses* were in Sir Roger *Lestrange's* Days. Now they are the *Nursery*

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of Indolence, and Sloth. The *Forge* of Lies. The *Blundershop* of the *Irish*; and if they afford any thing like Wit, 'tis all rais'd in a *Hot Bed*, and dies as soon as the Air is let in upon it. In a Word, the last Felicity of a Man of no Consequence is to shine in a *Coffee-House*.

I was once my self designing to set up for a *Wit*; but several things nearly concerning me made me desist from the *Enterprise*. A *Gentleman* of Experience caution'd me against it, upon these Considerations. If, said he, you have a Mind to Starve in a *Goal*, to be soundly *Cudgell'd*, and make your Exit at *Tyburn*; your ready way is to turn *Wit*. *Wit* and *Poverty* commonly go hand in hand. There are only two ways of Subsisting in this Life. *Trade*, and *Patrimony*. A *Wit* is too much given to *Flights* to be *Industrious*. Speculation is a thin Diet, and few grow Fat upon it. A Moderate *Genius*, *Dutch Capacity*, or *Trafficking Wit* is the only Method to grow rich. Between the *Book-seller* and the *Tavern*, the Wit Starves. He empties his Purse to supply himself with Wit, and the *Bookseller* brings so many Articles of
Discount

Discount for *Paper, Printing, Advertisements, Publishing, Stationers-Hall*; besides the Perquisites belonging to the Knavish Part of the *Calling*: That the *Copy-mony* will scarce keep the Wit alive, till some National Folly gives him an opportunity of Recruiting. Few *Wits* give the World any Diversion after they have Writ themselves into a *Post*. A Man that abuses another without Wit, deserves to be Cudgell'd: And he that does it wittily is actually Cudgell'd. Wit in these Days, as I observ'd before is divided in a great Measure between *Smut*, and *Satyr*; in both cases you are in danger of being beaten. upon the first Occasion the *Ladies* out of Decency, rap you with their Fan, in the latter you run the risque of a more serious Chastisement. But the Consequences of *Wit* are still more dreadful.

A *Wit* has sometimes a Temptation to become a *Politician*. He is for prying into *State Affairs*, and attacking *Parties*; in which Case he always falls a Sacrifice when the *Power* Shifts.

I have known one *Clergyman* made a *Dean*, and another condemn'd to the *Pillory*, for

the very same piece of Wit well and ill Calculated. Have we not all seen the Prisons of *London* and *Westminster*, crowded with *Wits* from the *Lord Treasurer* to the *Cobler of High-Gate*? *Printers*, *Publishers*, *Booksellers*, *News-writers*, *Ballad-singers*, and all such *Retailers* of Wit daily hurry'd to an unwelcome Retirement, are woeful Instances of the small Encouragement Men have to be witty. Nay every *Execution Day*, tho' *Traytors*, *Shoplifters*, *High-way-men*, *House-breakers* &c. are lamented by their Friends and Relations upon many other Accounts, yet nothing is so often repeated as the occasion of their dismal end, as an excess of *Wit* and *Ingenuity*.

While I was Entertaining my self with these Thoughts, an Assertion of Mr. *Whi—s* came into my Mind, *vid.* That the late general *Ecclipse* was a great Occasion of the Decay of *Wit* in this *Island*. The Reason he alledg'd was; because it created a certain Chillness in the *Inhabitants* which had never left them since, but daily prey'd more and more upon their natural Warmth, till at last it reduced 'em to such a State of Stupidity

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as to be obliged to muffle themselves up in *Masquerade*. But this perhaps may be look'd upon as much a *Dream*, as to make the *Comet* which appear'd before the Death of King *Charles* the Second, the Occasion of the General *Deluge*. So I leave the *Letter*, and only stick to the *Moral*. A great *Wit* may Eclipse little Ones so far, as to make the World regardless of them. There has been something of this of late in *Great Britain*. A great *Poet*, a great *Mathematician*, a great *General*, a great *Physician*, a great *Man*, and a great *King*, have made all others respectively insignificant in that Way. Who pretends to talk of Longitude in the Presence of Mr. R-----r ? To pronounce boldly upon a Distemper since the death of Dr. R-----e, or disturb the Peace of *Europe* when *King George* is the Guarantee of the Worlds Felicity ?

The Success of pretended *Wits* has depriv'd the World of the Blessing of real *Ones*. Nothing can be a greater Discouragement than to see *Trifles* Rewarded, and *Blockheads* carried in Triumph. The Success of very bad *Plays*, has made the best *Poets* turn *Farmers*, and *Stock-jobbers*; nothing discovers
more

more the National Degeneracy as to *Wit*, than to hear the *Theatre* clap at a Sergeant's calling a Country Clown Gentleman-Soldier, and sit unconcern'd at a *Period* worth a thousand *Pistoles*. When all other things were vendible, *Wit* cou'd never be purchas'd till of late. Ben *Johnson*, and *Shakespear* never brib'd for *Wit*. But now a Man is esteem'd either *Fool*, or *Wit*, according as he makes *Friends*, or *Enemies*. A Powerful *Patron* must be engaged by a *Dedication*. The World seduced by the blaze of a *Title*. The Trifle tip'd at both ends with a borrow'd *Prologue*, and *Epilogue*. The *Audience* bespoke from all Corners of the Town, before the Timorous *Wit* dare expose himself to the Publick. Strip C---r of these Advantages, and what will become of the N---j---r. (*Nonjaro*)

(*Cibber*) It is not to be Accounted the least occasion of the Decay of *Wit*, to be too well acquainted with *Foreign Languages*. This makes a Man a *Wit-hunter* which is no better than a *High-way-man*. The *Impiety* comes not to a head all on a suddain. It begins in our Youth, with Stealing our Exercise at *School* with capping Verses, and repeating *Hudibras*. Afterwards when we begin to set up for our selves,

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we are so addicted to transposing and translating, that we are never sure to say any thing of our own but when we say something that is dull and insipid. Are not one half of our *Book-sellers* Shops fill'd with Foreign Wit? The *Spanish Rogue*, the *Italian Politician*, the *German Rapsodist*, the *French Nouvelles*, *Romances* and *Memoirs* are the chief Ornament of every Gentleman's Library. The *Dutch* are the only People, who seem to have very little to complain of us for the embezelling of Foreign Wit.

Human Respect has a mighty Influence over our Actions, let them be good or bad. The State of this Life will not permit us to be so refin'd in our Motives, as not to have some Mercenary Views in the Performance of our Duty. This Imperfection is observable in *Wit*, as well as in other Things. The Fear of a *Critick* often makes Men either silent or insipid: This is no small Source of the Decay of *Wit*: *Bashfulness* is equal to *Folly*. There is no Difference as to the Improvement of Mankind, whether a Person is a *real Fool* or a *dumb Wit*. 'Tis the Awe the World lives in of
Criticks,

Criticks, which occasioneth this great Detriment. The greatest *Wit* has commonly more Pride than *Wit* ; and his Pride makes him conceal his *Wit*, for fear of being humbled under a Disappointment. A Man must be an *Impudent Wit* to survive being hiss'd once off the Stage : Hence it is that the most celebrated *Wit* will not venture himself abroad without the Strong Guard of a *Patron*, *Preface*, *Dedication* &c. And very often under all these Advantages, an ill Natur'd *Critic* shall trip up his Heels, and the *Pastry Cook* becomes the Heir of his *Lucubrations*. Nor indeed, can any *Wit* be without Fear upon these Occasions. If he is a *Party-man*, he directly challenges one half of the *Nation*. If he affects being *Prudent*, and sets up for a *Neutrality*, he is declar'd Insipid, and pleases no Body. *Writing a Book*, is stripping a Mans self Naked. He that conceals his Sentiments, and Learning may be supposed to know more than he really does. But when a *Person* Writes, he is supposed to write his best, and exhaust himself in the Cause ; and by making the rest of Mankind as wise as himself he becomes Contemptible.

The

The Death of a Parent is an insupportable Loss to a Child, when it is to be exposed to a *hazardous Education*. There is always a *Corps de reserve* in an Army to secure the *Conquest* at the latter end of a Day. Some Wits there are which languish, unless they are well Seconded. The *Ivy* climbs by the strength of the *Oak*; and the Feeble *uncorrect* Genius wants an able Hand to give it a Lustre. What a poor Figure do *Second Rate Wits*, make when they are left destitute by the Death, or Absence of a *Potent Auxiliary*? When one Wit turns *Secretary of State*, another ceaseth to be *Secretary of the Muses*. The *Oak* is cut down for the use of the *British Navy*, the *Ivy* falls, and is trodden under every Bodies Feet. Thus of late the rewarding of *Real Wits*, has been the ruin of *Pretenders*.

Nothing can be more opposite than *Wit* and *Traffick*. When the *bright Men* of a Nation give themselves to *Stock-jobbing*, they are Impenetrable to a Jest. The beauty of a fine *Period*, and *Numeration Table* have nothing Common. Those who were employed in comparing Antient, and Modern

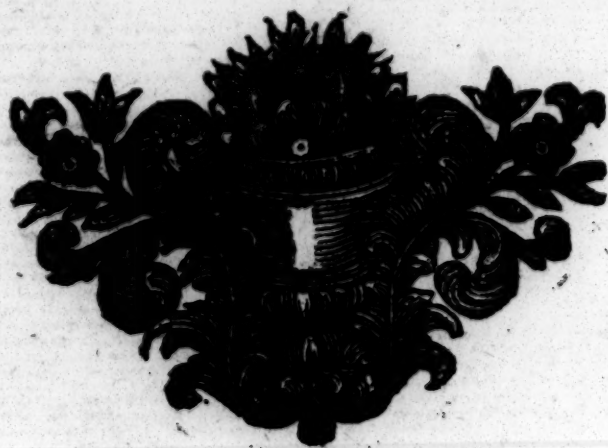
dern Authors, are now adjusting *Receipts* and *Disbursements*, While the *South Sea Stock* rises so much, Wit will fall Proportionably. And *Gresham-College* can never carry on their Projects of finding Forrests in the Bowels of Acrons, and equipping Fleets to fetch Weeds from the *Indies*, while *Coronets* and *Blew Garters* and such as shou'd contribute towards it, are seen so often at *Change Alley*.

Bad Company is no less dangerous in regard of Morals, than of Wit. *Thieves*, *Drunkards*, and *Whore-Masters*, are all made by the Force of *Example*. And a *Wit* degenerates by conversing with an unpolish'd *People*. The finest *Marble* discovers not its beautiful *Veins* till *Art* has improved *Nature*. Some Nations are *Refiners*, other Nations go no farther than a *Fowl-draught*. Some have their *upper Rooms* well Furnish'd, others their *Store-houses*. Frugality is commendable in low Life. But 'tis a hard *Fate* upon a Nation, that Men cannot become Rich without being Blockheads.

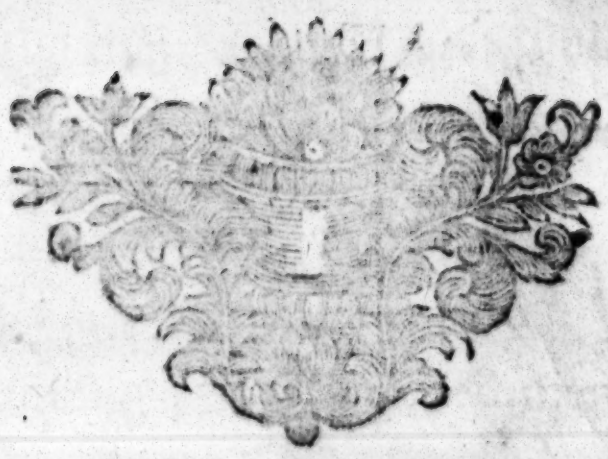
But among all the Impediments of Wit, none gives more Disturbance, especially in

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a *Mercenary Nation*, than that it shou'd go *unrewarded*, which I fear will be my Fate in this *Pamphlet*. *Bastards* are often made *Dukes*, *Whores Countesses*, and *Bawds* enrich'd with *Crown Lands*, while the *Wit* is removed from the Stage of Life, without either *Land*, or *Title*. The Sailor is provided for at *Greenwich*. The Soldier at *Chelsea*. But the *Wit* after he has languish'd away his Bloom in fruitless Attempts of climbing by *Intrinsick Merit*, has no Place to retire to but *Bedlam*; and so is under a Necessity of going out of his Wits, because he cou'd not live by 'em.



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